

## Petit Manan Point and Bois Bubert

Steuben & Milbridge, Maine

### **Description:**

Petit Manan Point and Bois Bubert Island, long recognized as important areas for breeding birds, maintain a geographic isolation that has helped maintain a distinct assemblage of uncommon natural community types in outstanding condition.



*Petit Manan Point (left) and Bois Bubert Island (right)  
1992 color infra-red air photo*

On Petit Manan Point, harsh climactic conditions and thin soils limit forest development to scattered patches of jack pine woodlands, maritime spruce-fir forests, spruce – pine woodlands, and spruce - heath barrens. Despite their small size, some of these woodland groves are approaching old growth stature -- two northern white cedars were aged at over 140 years old and one over 230 years old. Understory plants within these forest stands are sparse and include boreal species such as mountain cranberry (*Vaccinium vitis-idaea*) typically restricted to the Downeast coast and interior sub-alpine areas in Maine.

Toward the southern end of the point, low shrubs and herbs growing on a peaty substrate form one of only four maritime slope bogs known in Maine. On the eastern side of the point, coastal plateau bogs are juxtaposed next to two fresh to brackish ponds (Big Pond and Chair Pond) that are separated from the ocean by only a narrow cobble barrier beach. Small areas of tall grass meadow, dominated by bluejoint (*Calamagrostis canadensis*) that are characteristic of areas further Downeast, occur on the east side of the peninsula.

On Bois Bubert Island, several Downeast maritime shrublands protrude seaward from the southern end of the island and host sparse assemblages of black crowberry (*Empetrum nigrum*) and bayberry (*Myrica pensylvanica*). Bedrock depressions enable the formation of small peatlands in the interior of the island and of small salt marshes around the perimeter. Big Head Pond on Bois Bubert is a good example of a bermed brackish pond. Uplands on the island are sparsely forested with jack pine woodlands and black spruce barrens.

In addition to harsh climatic conditions, the vegetation assemblages of Petit Manan and Bois Bubert have been influenced by a number of other natural and anthropogenic factors, including past sheep grazing, fire (charcoal is frequent in the soils), and a large deer herd. Almost

all of Petit Manan Point has been used for grazing purposes, which continue in some privately owned areas. The abundance of deer has created heavy browse lines in stands where cedar is frequent.

According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the saltmarshes and mudflats of Petit Manan point attract waterfowl, wading birds, and shorebirds. Black ducks, great blue herons, and American bitterns use the saltmarshes, while semipalmated sandpipers, dowitchers, greater and lesser yellowlegs, and dunlins probe the mudflats for invertebrates. During fall migration, 80-acre Cranberry Flowage on Petit Manan Point is filled with over 4,000 ducks. Black ducks, green-winged teal, and mallards rest and feed on wild rice in preparation for the long flight south. Long-tailed ducks, surf and white-winged scoters, common goldeneyes, and common eiders winter in coastal waters. The former pastures and blueberry fields on Petit Manan Point provide nesting habitat for grassland birds such as bobolinks and savannah sparrows. In the spring, American woodcock use the clearings for their unique courtship displays. Whimbrels stop off here during their fall migration from the Arctic tundra to the southern United States. The Service maintains open areas through periodic mowing and controlled burning. (Source: <http://petitmanan.fws.gov>).

***Rare Species and Exemplary Natural Community Table for Petit Manan Point & Bois Bubert Island***

Common Name	Latin Name	S-RANK	G-RANK	State Status
<b><i>Exemplary Natural Communities</i></b>				
Tall Grass Meadow		S3	N/A	N/A
Brackish Tidal Marsh		S3	N/A	N/A
Coastal Plateau Bog Ecosystem		S3	N/A	N/A
Downeast Maritime Shrubland		S3	N/A	N/A
Jack Pine Woodland		S3	N/A	N/A
Maritime Slope Bog		S2	N/A	N/A
Maritime Spruce-Fir Forest		S4	N/A	N/A
Northern White Cedar Swamp		S4	N/A	N/A
Open Headland		S4	N/A	N/A
Spruce – Pine Woodland		S4	N/A	N/A
Black Spruce Barren		S2	N/A	N/A
<b><i>Rare Plants</i></b>				
Nova Scotia false-foxglove	<i>Agalinis neoscotica</i>	S1	G2?	T
Moonwort	<i>Botrychium lunaria</i>	S1	G5	E
Pickering's reed bent-grass	<i>Calamagrostis pickeringii</i>	S1	G4	T
Swarthy sedge	<i>Carex adusta</i>	S1	G5	E
Saltmarsh sedge	<i>Carex recta</i>	S1	G4	T
Bird's eye primrose	<i>Primula laurentiana</i>	S2	G5	SC
<b><i>Rare Animals</i></b>				
Bald eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	S4	G4	T

***Other Habitats Mapped by MDIFW:***

Tidal Waterfowl / Wading Bird Habitat

Freshwater Waterfowl / Wading Bird Habitat

Bald Eagle Essential Habitat

Shorebird Feeding and Roosting Areas

***Conservation Considerations:***

- In general, threats to these peatlands include peat mining, cranberry harvesting, timber harvest around the forested perimeters, and development. These threats have been removed by federal protection of this area.
- Fresh and brackish ponds should be monitored for purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) and common reed (*Phragmites australis*).
- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service owns and manages most of this focus area, including nearly all of the exemplary natural communities. The Service's primary focus at Petit Manan is restoring and managing colonies of nesting seabirds – many on offshore islands not included in this focus area. Refuge islands provide habitat for common, Arctic, and roseate terns; Atlantic puffins; razorbills; black guillemots; Leach's storm-petrels; laughing gulls; and common eiders. On Petit Manan Point, the Refuge has recently completed a natural community mapping project used to inform management decisions. For details on the Refuge and management, see <http://petitmanan.fws.gov>.

***Protection Status:***

Over 2,400 acres of this focus area have been protected as a National Wildlife Refuge, including over 1,700 acres on Petit Manan Point and over 500 acres on the southern portion of Bois Bubert Island, and approximately 140 acres on the northern tip of Bois Bubert Island. (Refuge acres total over 7,300 coast-wide.)